



NEWS RELEASE

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BLM Proposes \$1.7 Billion for FY 2005 Budget To Enhance Multiple-Use Management through Conservation Partnerships

To promote conservation partnerships that enhance its multiple-use management of the public lands, the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today proposed a Fiscal Year 2005 budget of \$1.7 billion. The BLM's FY 2005 budget proposal, which is a \$53 million programmatic increase over the FY 2004 enacted level of funding, would provide increases of \$4.8 million for the agency's resource-restoration Challenge Cost Share program and \$3.2 million for its sage-grouse conservation and restoration efforts. The budget request also includes increases of \$5.6 million for land acquisition and \$4 million for monitoring the implementation of new land-use plans. The Bureau's 2005 budget proposal redirects \$10.5 million for management of the more than 39,000 wild horses and burros that roam the public lands. Through a combination of new funds and redirected funds, the budget proposes an increase of \$12 million to improve the health of forest lands in western Oregon.

"Our agency's budget request supports cooperative conservation projects and promotes citizen-based stewardship of the public lands," said BLM Director Kathleen Clarke. "This will advance the vision of President Bush and Interior Secretary Gale Norton to empower citizens to do what the government cannot do alone."

Clarke noted that the Challenge Cost Share program has produced many partnership success stories, including a multi-year project with the City of Eugene, Oregon, that restored wetland habitat. Under the cost share program, which strives for a one-to-one dollar match or better, the city matched the BLM's \$150,000 contribution with \$525,000 to remove fill from 8.9 acres of historic prairie wetlands.

The \$12 million in funding for forest management in western Oregon includes:

- \$7 million in new funding for the BLM to begin revision of the six resource management plans in western Oregon, which will enable the Bureau to keep its commitments under the settlement of the lawsuit known as *American Forest Resource Council, et al. v. Clarke*. Under this settlement, the BLM agreed to fully fund the allowable sustainable timber quantity under the Northwest Forest Plan, which will be achieved through revision of these land use plans.



- \$788,000 in new funding for timber harvesting in late successional reserves, which will help remaining trees achieve old-growth characteristics by protecting them from wildfire, insects, and disease. The budget also redirects \$3.7 million within the Jobs in the Woods program for this effort.
- \$500,000 in redirected funding for pre-commercial thinning in late successional reserves, which will also foster old-growth characteristics.
- \$3.7 million in redirected funding for commercial thinning in late successional reserves to foster old-growth characteristics.

The BLM's budget also seeks \$1 million in new funding to implement a variety of timber-related initiatives on public domain lands, including stewardship contracting, a promising cost-effective tool for thinning timber stands, and conducting other treatments that will improve forest health.

The BLM's proposed increase for the wild horse and burro program, which totals \$10.5 million, would be used for improved monitoring, population census efforts, and fertility control. The proposed increase would be offset with decreases to BLM programs benefiting from an achievement of appropriate management levels and with reductions to lower-priority activities. The funding increase for the wild horse and burro program would advance the BLM's long-term strategy to bring the number of wild horses on public rangelands to appropriate management levels. Current levels of removal and adoption of these animals are not keeping pace with the herds' population growth, a situation that creates the potential for ecological imbalance and degradation of rangeland conditions, forage resources, and wildlife habitat. The population of wild horses and burros is more than 39,000; the Bureau's national goal for the appropriate management level is about 25,000.

The proposed \$4 million increase for resource monitoring, which builds on the \$1.9 million for monitoring that was part of the President's 2004 budget, would enable the BLM to collect better baseline data on the condition of the public lands and the impacts of certain activities. This funding request would strengthen the BLM's management and protection of such resources and help ensure that land-use plans and management decisions achieve their intended results.

The \$3.2 million in sage-grouse funding is aimed at preserving the habitat of the sage-grouse, a game bird that depends on sagebrush for shelter and food and whose numbers have been declining throughout the West. The BLM, which manages more than 30 million acres of sage-grouse habitat (about half of the bird's remaining habitat), is developing a management strategy in coordination with state wildlife agencies that seeks to prevent a listing of the bird under the Endangered Species Act. Such a listing would have negative effects on the BLM's multiple-use mission, including its management of livestock grazing, oil and gas activity, and outdoor recreation.

To help the Nation meet its energy needs, the BLM's budget proposal would provide an \$800,000 increase in the agency's Land and Realty Management program to enhance the permitting of renewable energy development and the processing of rights-of-ways for both renewable and traditional energy resources.

Additionally, the budget request includes \$4 million in cost recovery measures for the agency's energy and minerals programs, which would bring fees closer to administrative costs for certain services.

The BLM has also requested a \$55.2 million programmatic program increase above last year's budget for the Department of the Interior's Wildland Fire Program. The budget proposes increases of \$28.6 million in additional funding for suppression operations to fund it at the 10-year average and \$25 million for hazardous fuels reduction. The budget also includes a program increase of \$6.5 million for fire preparedness. These increases support the National Fire Plan, the President's Healthy Forests Initiative and the *Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003*.

Programs in the BLM budget funded below their 2004 enacted levels include the Alaska Land Conveyance program (\$8.9 million less than last year's level), which would return the program to the pace envisioned in the President's

2004 budget; the BLM's construction program (a \$7.3 million decrease from last year); and the cadastral or land-block legal boundary survey program (\$2.9 million below the 2004 level).

The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land — 261 million surface acres — than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a workforce of some 10,000 full-time, permanent employees, also administers 700 million acres of

sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on the public lands.

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